

Picture Tree boards Finnish drama 'Helene' starring Laura Birn (exclusive)

BY WENDY MITCHELL | 15 JANUARY 2020



SOURCE: PICTURE TREE INTERNATIONAL
'HELENE'

Picture Tree International has boarded sales for Antti Jokinen's Finnish drama *Helene*.

Picture Tree plans to screen the film for buyers at Goteborg's Nordic Film Market and at Berlin's European Film Market, with a festival premiere coming later in 2020. The film was previously touted as a work in progress in Haugesund in August 2019.

The biopic is about Helene Schjerfbeck, a Finnish painter who lived a quiet life in the countryside with her elderly mother. The film covers her life from 1915-1923, when an art dealer discovers her impressive collection of paintings and wants to organise a solo exhibition, and at the same time, she falls in love with a younger man named Einar Reuter.

Director Antti J. Jokinen, whose credits include *The Resident* and *Purge*, has been preparing to make the film for more than five years. He said, "Whilst doing my research, I discovered a strong, uncompromising, funny and honest artist. Meaning Helene was the perfect character for a dramatic movie."

Jokinen wrote the script with Marko Leino, based on the novel *Helene* by Raquel Liehu.

Laura Birn (*Purge*, *Game Of Thrones*) plays Helene and spent six months studying art to prepare for the role.

The cast also includes Johannes Holopainen (*The Unknown Soldier*), Eero Aho (*The Unknown Soldier*), and Jarkko Lahti (*The Happiest Day In The Life Of Olli Maki*).

Mikko Tenhunen produces for Finland Cinematic.

The Finnish Film Foundation financed \$890,000 (€800,000) of the film's \$2.5m (€2.3m) budget. Backers also include The Estonian Film Institute (Estonia's Stelalar Film co-produces), YLE, Nordisk Film and the Jane & Aatos Erkko Foundation.

Germany-based Picture Tree has recently taken on a number of Nordic titles, including Venice selection *Beware Of Children*, which will screen in Goteborg's Nordic Competition; and Swedish musical *A Piece Of My Heart*, which has racked up more than 300,000 admissions in Sweden so far.